

Sustainable Homestay Tourism, Ghalen Gaun, Kwholasothar Rural Municipality, Nepal: Demographics, Economic, and Long-term Viability

Sahas Bhandari¹

¹Kathmandu University, Nepal

Received: November 30,
2025

Revised: January 4, 2026

Accepted: February 20,
2026

Online: February 28, 2026

Abstract

This paper analyzes the homestay tourism in Gurung village, Ghale Gaun in Kwholasothar Rural Municipality in Nepal. It discusses the trends in population, tourism, economic and social effects, infrastructure sufficiency and long-term sustainability through a mixed method approach. The methods used to gather data were household surveys, interviewing of key informants as well as focus group discussions with the homestay operators, the local residents, and the institutional stakeholders. The results show that homestay tourism has had a great impact in enhancing the household income, empowering women economically and also in the conservation of Gurung cultural heritage. The study, however, notes that there are fundamental problems that curtail sustainable development, such as weak infrastructure, youth exodus, and insufficient institutional capacities. One of the research findings is that specialized measures in infrastructure development, improvement of service quality, and institutional empowerment are required to guarantee sustainability. The research paper adds to the general discussion of the community-based tourism and rural development in Nepal through the presentation of context specific findings of a successful but developing homestay model.

Keywords: *Homestay Tourism; Sustainability; Rural Development; Gurung Community; Nepal*

INTRODUCTION

Rural homestays have in recent years emerged as an acceptable model of sustainable and community-based tourism, especially in third world countries where tourism has become strongly connected with the local livelihood, culture and nature (Walter et al., 2018; Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Homestay tourism has become one of the strategic ways to address the rural poverty, employment, and the desire to maintain the indigenous culture in the country and connect with the global tourism markets (Lama, 2013; Subedi, 2025). One of the oldest and most famous examples of community-based homestay tourism in Nepal is “Ghalen Gaun”, a Gurung majority village in Lamjung District. Homestay tourism in “Ghalen Gaun” since its official introduction in the late 1990s has helped in diversifying household income, cultural renewal, and development of infrastructure at the village level (Walter et al., 2018). The village has been a standard on the national and global tourist literature as a prototype of rural and indigenous tourism based on community involvement and cultural authenticity. Nonetheless, homestay tourism in “Ghalen Gaun” is not very stable in the long-term perspective. Among emerging challenges identified by the existing studies are youth out-migration, uneven distribution of benefits, environmental pressure, climate vulnerability, and reliance on seasonal flows in the tourism industry. These dynamics link the necessity of a multi-dimensional evaluation of the homestay tourism that extends beyond the economic indicators to include the social, demographic and environmental factors. On this basis, this paper looks at the demographic, economic, social, and environmental aspects of the homestay tourism in “Ghalen Gaun” to determine its sustainability in the long run as a sustainable rural tourism model. The study is policy-relevant as it places “Ghalen Gaun” in the context of sustainable tourism theory and empirical studies and literature by positioning “Ghalen Gaun” in the context of

Copyright Holder:

© Bhandari. (2026)

Corresponding author's email: sahasbhandari11@gmail.com

This Article is Licensed Under:



community-based tourism in Nepal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a positive correlation between homestay tourism and rural livelihoods

The homestay tourism can also positively affect the rural livelihood by providing additional revenues, minimizing economic leakage, and employment opportunities in host communities, as illustrated by a significant amount of literature ([Walter et al., 2018](#)). Homestay tourism has been associated in Nepal with the increase in the stability of the household income and local economic flow, especially in remote and mountainous areas where agriculture is not sufficient. According to empirical research conducted in “Ghalen Gaun” and similar homestays like Sirubari and Bandipur, the homestays do not only generate cash cash but also enhance social amenities such as sanitation, education awareness and community organization ([Ghimire, 2023](#)). Nevertheless, researchers warn that extreme dependence on tourism revenues can make it easier to be affected by outside shocks, which has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic ([Gautam et al., 2025](#)).

Community, Indigenous Knowledge, and Culture

Homestay tourism is directly linked with preservation of culture and appreciation of local knowledge. The research on Gurung groups highlights that the main tourist attractions in “Ghalen Gaun” are cultural performances, food habits, architecture, and daily hospitality. These practices strengthen the sense of cultural pride and generational knowledge as well as commodifying culture to be used as a kind of tourism. It is a well-known fact that community involvement is one of the determinants of sustainable tourism results. The comparison of “Ghalen Gaun” with other homestay destinations shows that effective local institutions and collective decision-making are beneficial in increasing host satisfaction and destination resilience ([Ghimire, 2023](#); [Walter et al., 2018](#)). On the other hand, the sustainability of community-based tourism projects is endangered by poor governance systems and deterioration of youth involvement.

Environmental Sustainability and Tourism Pressure

The issue of environmental sustainability is still a burning question in the development of rural tourism. Although homestay tourism can be viewed as low-impact, the accumulation of activities including waste production, water consumption, and alteration of landscapes may overload the fragile mountain ecosystems. Research by “Ghalen Gaun” points at positive conservation outcomes and increasing environmental stress associated with the rise in visitor numbers and expansion of infrastructures.

These results are consistent with the wider body of sustainable tourism literature, which emphasizes that environmental planning, institutional capacity, and adaptive governance are initiatives that should support community-based tourism to take place in the long run ([Pasanchay & Schott, 2021](#)).

Theoretical Framework

The paper is based on the Sustainable Tourism Theory and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, which would offer a comprehensive perspective on the analysis of sustainability in homestay tourism. According to the Sustainable Tourism Theory, tourism development must be a balance between economic gains, social equity, and environmental preservation to satisfy the current needs without destroying the future generation ([Pasanchay & Schott, 2021](#)). This method is especially applicable in rural and indigenous tourism situations, where ecosystems, culture and livelihoods are closely linked. The Triple Bottom Line model defines the concept of sustainability in three interconnected aspects, namely economic viability, social well-being, and environmental

stewardship. Economic viability in the case of homestay tourism means the generation of income and livelihood diversification, social well-being means, community participation, cultural continuity, and gender inclusion, and environmental stewardship means responsible utilization of resources and conservation ([Walter et al., 2018](#)). The frameworks would allow a systematic evaluation of the homestay tourism in “Ghalen Gaun” in terms of what it can do to rural development and the structural hurdles that can negate long-term sustainability.

Objective of The Study

The objectives of this study are clear, as they are as follows:

1. To test the demographic nature and trends of the households engaging in homestay tourism in Ghale Gaun.
2. To determine the economic benefits of homestay tourism on household income, employment and livelihood diversification.
3. To assess the social and cultural effects of homestay tourism especially in the context of the empowerment of women and maintenance of Gurung cultural heritage.
4. To examine the sufficiency of the infrastructure and institution support systems that can support homestay tourism within the community.
5. To outline the main issues and suggest recommendations on how to enhance the long-term feasibility and viability of homestay tourism in Ghale Gaun.

Research Question

The guiding question of this study is as follows:

Question 1:

What are the impacts of homestay tourism in Ghale Gaun on economic, social and environmental factors of the community and what determines long term sustainability of homestay tourism?

The objective of this question is to define both the physical and non-physical effects of tourism and to examine what aspects can facilitates or restrict sustainable development in the village.

METHOD

Stages of the Implementation of Programs.

The research had a systematic implementation mechanism in the community to learn and facilitate the practice of homestay tourism in Ghale Gaun. The stages involved in implementation were:

1. Planning and Coordination: Preliminary coordination with Kwholasothar Rural Municipality, tourism committees and the community leaders to establish the scope of activities and seek the required approvals.
2. Community Engagement: Interaction with the homestay operators, households, and other stakeholders in the community in order to foster involvement and build trust.
3. Field Work: Fieldwork observations and involvement in the current homestay tourism operations, such as accommodation services, cultural programs and the interaction with visitors.
4. Validation and Feedback: Preliminary findings and observations were discussed with the community members and stakeholders to get feedback and validation.

Research Methods

The research design used in the study was mixed methods research design, which combines both

the quantitative and qualitative methods to give a detailed picture of the effects of homestay tourism.

a. Quantitative Methods:

Four groups of questionnaires were done using structured questionnaires on the 46 homestay operators and visitors and 120 households. The questionnaire was on demographic features, income level of households, satisfaction in visiting the area, and perceptions of the community concerning infrastructure and services. The data that was gathered was examined with the help of descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations that helped to determine the trends in the distribution of incomes, the behavior of visitors, and the sufficiency of the infrastructure.

b. Qualitative Methods:

As a supplement to the quantitative results, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with community leaders, youths, women and service providers were undertaken. Such discussions covered topics associated with cultural maintenance, governance systems, institutional strengths and views about tourism sustainability. The thematic coding was used in analysing the qualitative data to find common patterns, emerging issues and community views.

c. Sampling:

The sampling was combined with a purposive and stratified random sampling. The key informants and homestay operators were sampled purposely, whereas households were sampled with stratified random sampling so as to cover all age groups, both genders, and socio-economic groups.

Research and Evaluation Process

The systematic sequence of the research and evaluation was as follows:

1. Research Design: The mixed-methods approach will be adopted.
2. Data Collection: Surveys, interviews, focus group discussion and observation.
3. Data Analysis: Quantitative data- descriptive statistics, qualitative data- thematic analysis.
Validation: Triangulation of more than one source of data to achieve reliability.
4. Reporting: Interpretation and recording of the findings.

Ethical Reflections

All the participants gave informed consent and were assured of confidentiality. All ethical principles of research were adhered to, such as the respect of the local culture and the consideration of social relations.

Positionality of researcher and Positioning of philosophers:

Having been the researcher, I was able to work with Ghale Gaun as an external consultant in field research and as an academic researcher, in partnership with Smart Tech Nepal and Kwholasothar Rural Municipality. This two-fold position allowed me to monitor and evaluate community practices and be on the frontline in terms of data collection and community involvement. The research was informed by a constructivist ontological position that acknowledges that the effects of tourism are social constructs whose effects are experienced by various stakeholders in varied ways such as women, youth, and the elderly. The methods were informed by an interpretivist epistemology, which focuses on the fact that knowledge is co-constructed because of engagement in participatory work, interviews, and observation. An axiological perspective is also integrated into the study, which represents an interest in preserving the culture, gender equality, ethical interaction, and empowerment of the community in the course of the research.

Figure 1. Implementation and Research Framework

Implementation Process

1. Planning → 2. Engagement → 3. Field Activities → 4. Validation

Research Process

1. Design → 2. Data Collection → 3. Analysis → 4. Validation → 5. Reporting

1. Planning → 2. Engagement → 3. Field Activities → 4. Validation

1. Design → 2. Data Collection → 3. Analysis → 4. Validation → 5. Reporting

Research Site and Study Area

Research Site: Ghale Gaun

“*Ghalen Gaun*” (“*Ghale*”-Ethnic Cast Gurung “*Gaun*”-Village Community) is a picturesque mountain village standing at the elevation of about 2, 100 above the sea level in the “*Lamjung*” District, Nepal. It belongs to *Kwholasothar* Rural Municipality and it is approximately 108 kilometers North west of Kathmandu and 12.5 kilometers northeast of Pokhara, along Annapurna Circuit. The village has become an international model tourism destination in Asia known to have community-based homestay tourism and the high level of trying to conserve local culture. One of the major attractions in the village is the SAARC Village Tourism Museum that first opened its doors in 2017 and helps to showcase the village as a pioneer in the field of sustainable rural tourism in the locality.

The ethnic group that is mostly represented in “*Ghalen Gaun*” is the Gurung group of people, which have had very strong cultural activities, like traditional music and dance, crafts and stories. These are the cultural resources that the village is known by and are the major attraction to the visitors. This has happened in the past twenty years in the local economy, as the subsistence farming and forest-based livelihoods have been slowly replaced by homestay tourism, which gives the locals alternative sources of income. The women especially are involved in the running of homestays and tourism income management of the household which is an excellent change in social and economic empowerment. “*Ghalen Gaun*” Tourism has increased consistently and currently receives 1500-2000 visitors each year with high season occupancy of 60-75% and low-season occupancy of 10-20%. The village is breathtaking because it has views of the surrounding Himalayas which include Mount “*Machhapuchare*”, Mount Annapurna, Mount “*Lamjung*”, Mount Manaslu and Mount Ngadi “*Chuli*”. The combination of the natural landscapes and the rich culture heritage of the village make “*Ghalen Gaun*” the best place to visit in terms of experiential, cultural, as well as eco-tourism.

Although it is successful, “*Ghalen Gaun*” has persistent problems. The infrastructure is poor and majority of the roads are made up of foot-trails, internet connectivity is low, and the waste management facilities are minimal. Tourism seasonality has an impact on the stability of incomes, and the provision of institutional support is required to guarantee the sustainability of tourism in the long term. Nonetheless, the village is an excellent case study of community-based tourism as it

has the capacity to enhance the economic growth of the community, the culture and the environment, which are the reasons why it can be considered as an example of rural tourism in Nepal.

Researcher Positionality

As a researcher, I personally worked with *Ghale Gaun* as a field consultant and scholarly researcher and collaborated with Smart Tech Nepal and the *Kwhalisathr* Rural Municipality. This research was carried out as an outsider, who introduced the element of professional knowledge about rural tourism, community development, and inclusive learning to access organized data and be aware of the cultural details. In a qualitative study, it is a well-established fact that ontological and epistemological beliefs of a researcher influence the process of the study and interpretation (Darwin Holmes, 2020; [Gurr et al., 2024](#)). Being an outsider as a researcher I was free to view the practices of a community analytically without interfering with the local norms, social order, as well as organization. I followed a participatory and reflexive research approach that incorporated the perspectives and lived experiences of the participants in the study, that is, homestay operators, women leaders, youth participants, elders, and municipal representatives, as they influenced data collection and interpretation (Darwin Holmes, 2020; [Gurr et al., 2024](#)). I also paid attention to power relations and ethical concerns during the research and tried to reflect the community as it is and incorporate professional knowledge. Such an approach allowed the exploration of the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental aspects of homestay tourism in Ghale Gaun in a more subtle way and make the recommendations realistic, context-dependent, and in line with the local development priorities to promote a sustainable tourism and community resilience ([Gurr et al., 2024](#)).

Research Demographics

Table 1. Research Area

Indicator	Value
Population	900-1,100
Households	170-200
Literacy Rate	76-78%
Ethnic Composition	95%+ Gurung
Women in Tourism	76% operators, 70% income control.
Youth Out-Migration	50%

“*Ghalen Gaun*” has high ethnic cohesion, and comparatively good literacy, which contributes towards good community-based tourism practices. Women are the key economic players and most of the tourism activities and a large portion of the earnings are in the hands of women. Nonetheless, high levels of youth out-migration create a threat to the sustainability of local tourism and community development in the long-run perspective

Homestay Tourism Development.

Figure 1. Homestays in “Ghalen Gaun” (2001-2025) Growth.

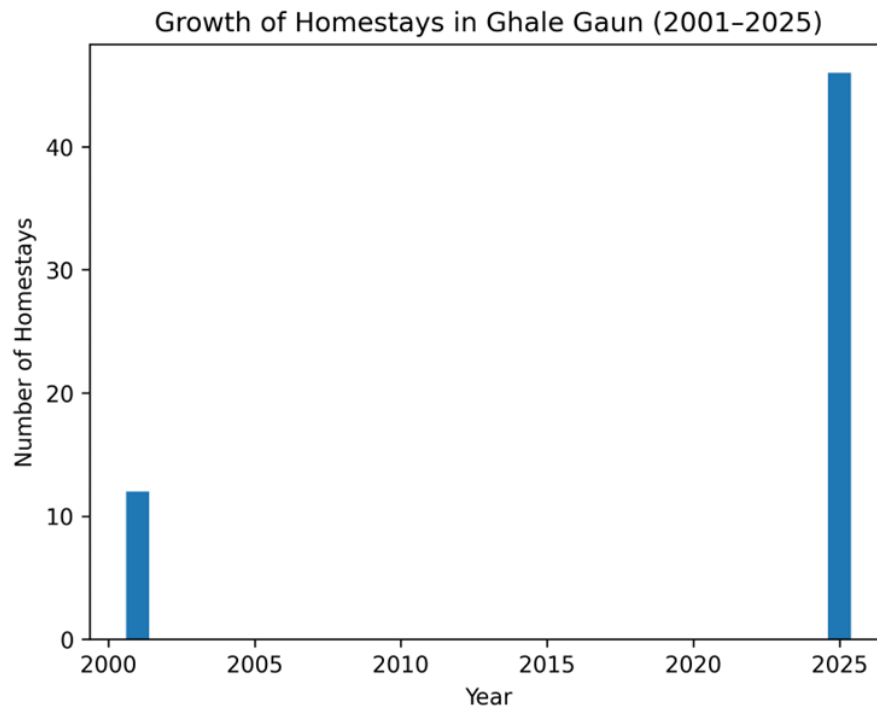


Figure 1. The Growth of the Number of Homestays Between 12 Homestays in the Year 2001 and 46 Homestays in the Year 2025

Table 2. Home Stay Growth in 5 years

Year	No. of Homestays
2001	12
2025	46

There is a steady growth in tourism with the number of homestays in “Ghalen Gaun” increasing to 46 in 2025 as compared to 12 in 2001.

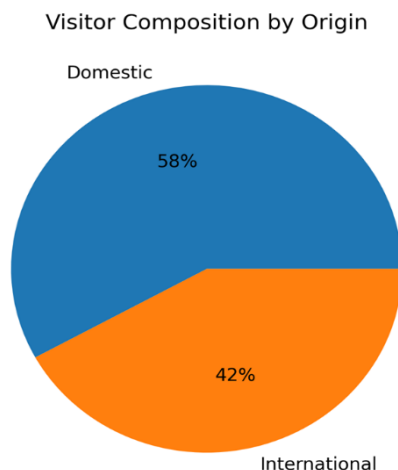


Figure 2. Bar Chart of The Homestay Growth and Pie Chart of The Visitor Composition.

Economic Impacts

Table 3. The impact of Tourism on Enhancing The Local Economy of “Ghalen Gaun” Is That Household Incomes

Indicator	Value
Average Household Income	NRs. 180,000–220,000
Income Increase	100–150%
Total Annual Impact	NRs. 11–15 million
Multiplier Effects	NRs. 3–5 million
Income Inequality	Gini 0.32–0.35

The impact of Tourism on enhancing the local economy of “Ghalen Gaun” is that household incomes were boosted significantly with the average earnings growing by about 100-150. The industry has already started developing NRs. 11-15 million a year into the village economy and NRs. 3-5 million in multiplier impacts in associated consumption (local food supply, handicraft, transportation, and services). Notably, income distribution is rather fair with a medium Gini coefficient (0.32-0.35), which means that the economic advantages of tourism are distributed among the community, not in a small number of households.

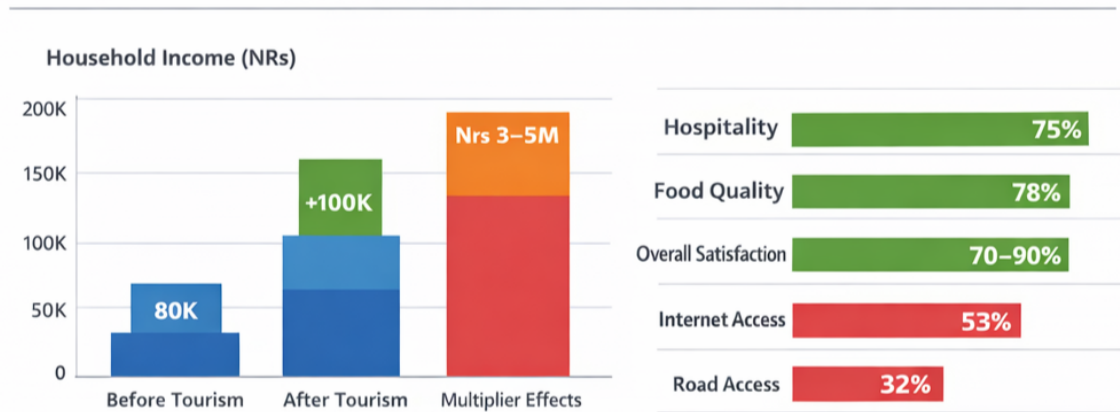


Figure 3. Income Before and After Tourism and Multiplier Effect Contribution.

Multiplier effects in food, crafts and services have seen tourism significantly boost household incomes and make economies in the region active.

8. Service Quality and Satisfaction of Visitors.

Table 4. Satisfaction vs Dissatisfaction Across Key Dimensions

Dimension	Satisfaction (%)
Overall	70-90
Hospitality	75 (very satisfied)
Food Quality	78 (satisfied)
Road Access	32 (dissatisfied)
Internet	53 (dissatisfied)

“Ghalen Gaun” in terms of visitor satisfaction is generally positive with overall satisfaction standing between 70-90 which is highly influenced by a high level of hospitality and food quality. Nevertheless, reduced satisfaction with accessibility of roads and internet connection indicates major weaknesses in the infrastructure that could influence visitor experience and restraining extended stay.

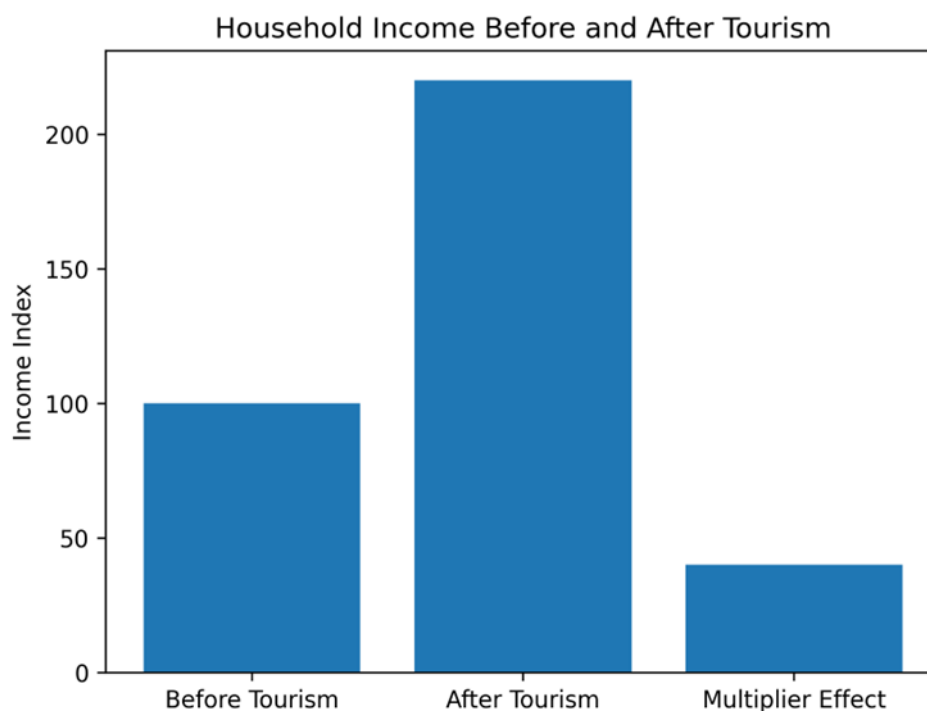


Figure 4. Household Income Before and After Tourism

Poor infrastructure deprives visitors of their satisfaction and average length of stay.

Infrastructure and Sustainability.

Table 5. Suitability

Infrastructure	Status
Road	Foot-trails dominant; 48% dissatisfied
Water	Adequate, seasonal variation
Electricity	15–20 kW hydro + solar; sufficient
Internet	Limited (5–15 Mbps); 53% dissatisfied
Waste	Minimal system; composting practiced

The lack of infrastructure especially access to roads and internet services hamper the general satisfaction of the visitors and discourage the visitors to stay longer and therefore the possibilities to spend more on tourism activities, repeat tourism, and diversification of tourism activity in the “*Ghalen Gaun*” infrastructure profile shows that although the infrastructure quality of such basic services as water supply, renewable energy, and composting waste is mostly sufficient to meet the current influx of visitors, there are major deficiencies in the road accessibility and internet

connectivity

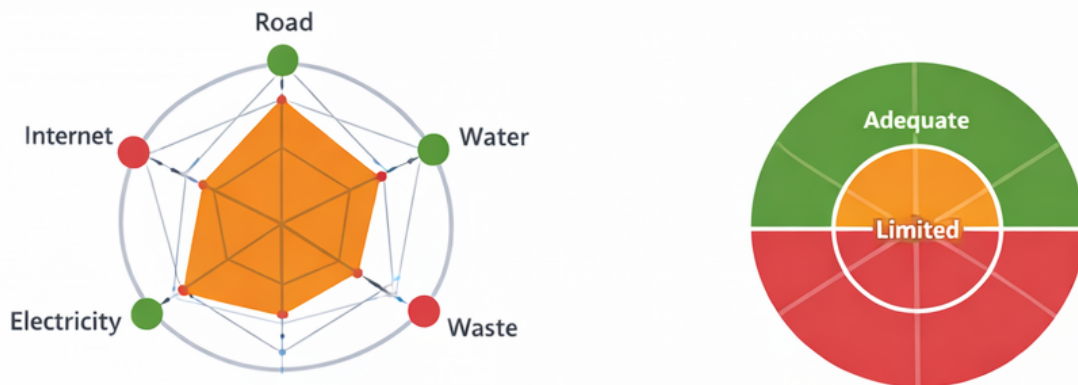


Figure 5. Spider/Radar Chart Comparing Infrastructure Adequacy

The dissatisfaction rates with the trails are high, and the internet speed is limited, which indicates the lack of accessibility, communication, and comfort of the visitors. Even though the ecological carrying capacity of the village is able to support the current levels of tourism, sustaining the medium term and the possibility to stay longer will rely on the focused enhancements to transport and information infrastructure without the deterioration of the environmental integrity.

Institutional Management and Governance.

Table 6. Government Management System In These Area

Aspect	Status
Homestay Association	Active, 46 members, monthly meetings
Youth Participation	30–40% engaged
Challenges	Documentation, succession planning, limited capacity

The traditional forms of governance are working, but institutional fortification and leadership among the youths are necessary in a long-term sustainable manner. Community Organization The homestay is well organized, with a strong local structure exhibited by a strong homestay association. Nonetheless, moderate youth involvement and problems of persistent failures in documentation, succession in leadership and institutional capacity assert a necessity of specific enhancement to provide long-term sustainability of community-based tourism.

Long-Term Viability

1. In the short-run: Sustainable in the present.
2. Medium-term (5-8 years): This is dependent on infrastructure investments.
3. It is necessary to have long-term (greater than a decade) institutional capacity building and climate adaptation.
4. Possible expansion: 50-75 homestays, 3,000-4,000 visitors every year.

The management of the institution and governance by “Ghalen Gaun” is supported by an active homestay association that consists of 46 members and has regular monthly meeting, which is a sign of good community coordination and concerted action. The involvement of youth is average with 30-40 percent of the youth involved in tourism activities with the major problems facing the industry as documentation, succession planning, and institutional capacity. Despite the success of traditional governance frameworks, it will be important to improve institutional arrangements and promote leadership among the youth in order to make community-based tourism programs sustainable and resilient in the long-term.



Figure 6. Timeline Showing Projected Growth and Sustainability Scenarios

Sustainability of tourism in “Ghalen Gaun” is temporal. At the short-term, the current activities are normally sustainable and it is backed up with proper infrastructure and management of the community. In the medium run (5-8 years), the sustainability will be maintained due to the selective investment in roads, connectivity, and basic services. The sustainability (10 years and long-term) will be the proactive approach to climate adaptation, institutional capacity to control growth and environmental impacts. Through such interventions, the village can be developed to 50-75 homestays and receive 3,000-4,000 visitors per year without subjecting nature and culture to a threat through excessive development in tourism.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The study reveals that homestay tourism in “Ghalen Gaun” has significantly increased during the last two decades and it has redefined the lives of the locals and the community structures. The growth in the number of homestays raised in 2001 (12) to 2025 (46) able to host about 1500-2000 visitors every year, of which 55-60% were domestic and 40-45% foreigners. The period of stay by the visitors is 1.07-1.5 days, which makes the rural Nepal a short-duration tourism destination. The occupancy is quite seasonal and it reaches up to 60-75 percent during the high season but plummets to 10-20 percent in off-season thus the importance of some strategies to overcome the seasonal variations.

In economic terms, the household incomes have increased 100-150 percent with a total annual economic impact of NRs. 11-15 million and a multiplier effect of NRs. 3-5 million. Income inequality is moderate (Gini coefficient 0.32-0.35) which implies the rather equal distribution of

tourism benefits. The satisfaction of visitors is relatively high (70-90%), and the hospitality levels are good (75%), as well as the quality of food (78%). However, the lack of satisfaction with road access (32%), and internet connectivity (53%) shortens the length of stay and the total experience, and infrastructure gaps are also cited as a critical weakness.

The village boasts of a vibrant homestay association of 46 members, which gives an organization and community coordination. The level of youth participation is moderate (30-40%), both in terms of engagement possibilities and the threat of gaps in leadership with out-migration. Hydro and solar systems are largely adequate to provide water supply, electricity, and the amount of waste management infrastructure is minimal, which leads to the problem of environmental sustainability.

Theoretically, the results are echoed by the community-based tourism (CBT) theory, which focuses on the importance of the local involvement, shared governance, and the cultural embeddedness in attaining the results of sustainable tourism. The example of “Ghalen Gaun” shows that community ownership, leadership of women and social cohesion can be used to achieve economic benefits but retain cultural heritage, which theories of participatory development and social capital in rural tourism support (Tosun, 2006; Baral, 2009). The multiplier impacts on local livelihoods are positive and this is an indication that tourism meets the requirements of sustainable livelihood approaches where tourism is one of the vehicles in the diversification of incomes, reduction of risks, and empowerment (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

In general, the findings indicate that the homestay tourism model of “Ghalen Gaun” is short-term sustainable at the moment, but medium-term sustainability is based on strategic investments in infrastructure, long-term sustainability is determined by the adaptation to the climate, strengthening of the institution, and development of the youth leaders. The village portrays the possibility of development to 50-75 homestays and 3,000-4,000 visitors per year as long as the dimensions of environment, social and institutional areas are tightly controlled.

Altogether, the study provides a strong emphasis on the fact that rural homestay tourism in “Ghalen Gaun” could have a high economic, social, and cultural value, and at the same time, it could be noted that there are issues related to infrastructure, environmental management, and succession planning. By showing that local ownership, active participation, and cultural embeddedness are essential to the long-term viability and sustainability of rural tourism initiatives, the findings support well-established theoretical perspectives on community-based tourism (CBT), participatory governance, and sustainable livelihoods. Prior studies have demonstrated that when communities are truly involved in the planning, decision-making, and management of tourism activities, sociocultural and economic outcomes improve in tandem with environmental stewardship ([Jan & Lee, 2019](#)). By ensuring that the benefits of tourism are kept in local communities, these participatory approaches strengthen resilience and reinforce cultural values while also fostering a sense of belonging, enhancing local capacities, and supporting sustainable livelihoods (Restrepo Rico et al., 2024).

Discussion

Results of this study highlight the fact that the “Ghalen Gaun” homestay tourism has been extremely economically, socially, and culturally influential. The rising number of visitors visiting the homestays, an increase in the homestays since 12 in 2001 to 46 in 2025 depict the growing role of the rural tourism in the local development. The economic viability and transformative potential of the community-based tourism (CBT) can be seen by the 100-150 percent increase in household income, total economic contribution of NRs. 11-15 million and a multiplier effect of NRs. 3-5 million. These findings correlate with the current body of literature available in Nepal indicating that homestays are effective means of poverty eradication, income diversification, and gender equality

[\(Walter et al., 2018; Tiwari & Khatiwada, 2025\).](#)

One of the major results of “Ghalen Gaun” model is women empowerment. Most women establish and run the homestays, and deal with tourism-related incomes, which depict the principles of inclusive participation as presented in the theory of participatory development. They do not only increase household income but also improve the social capital of the community, which leads to cooperation, making decisions together, and sharing cultural knowledge. On the same note, the current levels of youth participation, which has been maintained at 30-40 percent, will be important in the continuity and sustainability of the community-based governance structures. According to the findings, the strategy to curb the impact of rural out-migration should involve the involvement of youth through specific training, leadership, and decision-making processes.

The other important dimension is cultural preservation. The homestay tourism has enhanced the recognition and appreciation of the Gurung cultural heritage and traditional crafts, oral storytelling and festivals. This reinforces cultural sustainability models, which stipulates that preservation and propagation of intangible cultural heritage is a vital attribute to the identity of the community and the longevity of tourism appeal. “Ghalen Gaun” has shown how economical development can be matched to cultural integrity by incorporating the cultural heritage into the visitor experiences and this observation is in line with the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model which highlights balance between economic, social and environmental development.

Although these achievements were experienced, the study points out that there are some serious challenges that endanger the sustainability in the long run. Structural constraints especially accessibility by road and internet connectivity to the infrastructure diminish satisfaction of visitors, restricting the duration of stay and the growth of tourism services. The results are similar to other research studies of rural tourism, where the quality of services and physical infrastructure are highly associated with visitor satisfaction and the economic influences [\(Tiwari et al., 2025\)](#). On the same note, environmental management is an issue. The lack of waste management facilities and use of weak foot-trails is an indication that though the present ecological carrying capacity is adequate, medium- and long-term sustainability might be compromised without specific interventions.

“Ghalen Gaun” has an opportunity with its institutional framework which should be reinforced. Good governance and collective action are created by the active involvement of women in the homestay association, which makes women vulnerable due to difficulty in documentation, succession planning, and leadership by youths. The village is likely to lose its central management edge that is based on community-based management without dealing with these institutional gaps that are at the core of the success of the homestay model. This is in line with the CBT theory that lays emphasis on good local institutions and participatory governance in relation to sustainable tourism development (Tosun, 2006).

Regarding sustainability, the research presents that economic benefits are not enough. The Triple Bottom Line model is especially applicable in this case: the experience of “Ghalen Gaun” has demonstrated that tourism is to be planned in a way that would allow focusing on economic profitability, as well as on social equity and environmental stewardship. Long term sustainability can be undermined without long term strategic interventions in terms of infrastructure development, youth involvement, institutional fortification, and environmental protection.

There are also later implications of the findings in wide theoretical and practical implications. “Ghalen Gaun” is an excellent example of rural community-based tourism and proves that the specificity of participation, the cultural rootedness, and social solidity are essential factors of success. Replication in other rural situations should however be done cautiously. Depending on context-specific determinants such as cultural cohesion, community organization, and environmental capacity, the success of the homestay model depends on the context. It is necessary to incorporate these factors into the larger rural development initiatives, climate adaptation

strategies and tourism policy models in order to scale up the model in a sustainable manner.

Concerning actual recommendations, it is best the policy and operating interventions focus on:

1. Infrastructure development - enhancement of the road system, digital connectivity, water and waste management systems.
2. Capacity building - developing female, young, and local operator hospitality, management and entrepreneurial skills.
3. Institutional fortification - institutionalization of homestay associations, youth leadership and succession plans and succession plans and documentation.
4. Environmental control and climate response - incorporating sustainable resource utilization, environmentally friendly infrastructures and climate resilient design.
5. Connection with rural development models - connecting homestay tourism with socio-economic and ecological development plans.

Last but not least, the study is significant to the existing literature on the community-based rural tourism in Nepal because of its integration of empirical research in “Ghalen Gaun” and theoretical knowledge on the CBT, the participatory development, the TBL, and the sustainable livelihood approaches. It illustrates that rural homestay tourism is not just an economic policy, but also a social and cultural intervention, and it empowers, unites, and promotes heritage. But the success of the model in the long-run depends on strategic planning, responsive administration and comprehensive incorporation of the economic, social and ecological goals.”Ghalen Gaun” demonstrates the possibilities and the problems of community-based homestay tourism. Its experience guides other rural communities in that inclusive participation, cultural conservation, environmental protection as well as strategic institutional support are key to sustainable tourism development. Future studies ought to be comparative case studies in Nepal, the best practices which can be applied to scale homestay tourism and protect the local livelihoods, culture, and ecology.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

1. Infrastructure Development: Better roads, foot-trails, year-round access, increase internet services, reliable water supply, and sanitation. Provide good waste management such as composting and recycling.
2. Climate resilience and Environmental Protection: Become sustainable in its forest management, conserve biodiversity and encourage sustainability in water management and climate-friendly infrastructure. Supervise the environmental capacity to avoid depletion of resources.
3. Cultural Preservation: Preserving local languages, arts and oral traditions. Promote tourism through festivals, narration and cultural performances. Engage the elderly and culture bearers in cultural learning and incorporate culture in branding and marketing.
4. Policy Governance and Integration: Enhance the linkage of local governance with the district tourism offices and the national tourism policies. Make sure that it meets tourism standards, safety, and quality certifications. Ensure women and marginalized groups are included in decision making and ensure that tourism plans are put in line with disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation plans.

Strategic/ Operational Recommendations.

1. Capacity Building and Quality of Service: Regular homestay operator hotel training (hospitality and service). Enhance communication, customer care, and language. Create

visitor feedback systems and encourage entrepreneurship in tourist related services like guiding, transport and handicraft.

2. Institutional Strengthening: Oactive homestay associations should be supported, and coordinated. Promote the youth involvement and leadership in tourism. Enhance documentation, record-keeping as well as succession planning. Put in place monitoring and evaluation systems in the communities.
3. Economic Diversification: Organize low-season tourism in form of festivals, cultural shows, and eco-tourism. Market local goods through co-operations and groups. Promote value-added products, including local food, experience and handicraft. Promote sustainable alternative tourism related livelihoods.
4. Digital Transformation and Innovation: Go online and use digital marketing and online booking to homestays. Create mobile applications or web portals containing tourist information, maps and guides. Measuring visitor flows, satisfaction, and environmental impacts, use digital tools to monitor them. E-commerce on products and handicrafts.

CONCLUSION

The outstanding example of how rural homestay tourism can be a revolution to communities where economic, social and cultural preservation are made at the same time is given by Ghale Gaun. During the research process, it was realized that the village tourism has created physical growth in household earnings and homestays have acted as a stable income generator that supplements the household farming activities. The involvement of women in the operation of homestays has also been outstanding given the fact that in addition to economic empowerment, the practice also changes the traditional gender roles, which involves increased women involvement in decision-making and leadership in the society. Similarly, the connection of youths in tourism activities has contributed to the growth of skills, cultural knowledge and innovation in the service delivery, although the current process of out-migration presents an alarming issue on the future of local leadership and sustainability of a community management.

Socially and culturally, homestay tourism offered by Ghale Gaun has strengthened the unity of the communities and has enabled the Gurung cultural heritage to be preserved and encouraged. Traditional music, dance, storytelling, crafts, and festivals are not only in the core of the local identity but also an essential part of the tourist experience and have created a sense of pride and strengthened intergenerational knowledge transfer. These data are consistent with the previous studies of the community-based tourism that highlights the promise of the homestay models to increase social capital, encourage cultural resiliency, and participatory development ([Walter et al., 2018](#)). The village therefore shows that tourism when based on community involvement and cultural representation, can be more than just an economic pursuit; it can be a means of cultural conservation and social empowerment.

Nevertheless, the paper also sheds light on a number of challenges, which should be overcome to facilitate the long-term sustainability. The infrastructure constraints like foot-trail roads, low internet connectivity and poor waste management still pose a constraint to the satisfaction of visitors and stability in tourism revenue especially in the low season. The challenges posed to sustainability of community-led tourism initiatives are institutional vulnerabilities such as documentation loopholes, succession planning, and formal governance structures. Moreover, environmental forces, as well as the possible over-reliance on tourism as the main source of income, indicate the necessity of sustainable and robust development policies. These weaknesses can destroy the very pillars of success that have enabled Ghale Gaun to emerge as an ideal tourism destination.

Theoretically, the results of this research would find a lot of echoes in the Triple Bottom Line

model, which states that sustainable tourism should be able to create a balance between economic success, social justice, and environmental conservation. In Ghale Gaun, economic results are observed, social benefits are seen to arise but with unequal distribution, and environmental sustainability is at risk, and the point is that, it needs holistic planning, specific policy interventions, and responsive management tactics. The ability to employ a positive nuance in my position as a researcher working closely with Smart Tech Nepal and Kwholasothar Rural Municipality allowed me to understand these dynamics more. Through close interaction with the house stay owners, women chiefs, younger and older generations, and city officials, I could observe the dynamics between social, economic, and cultural aspects with my own eyes during the analysis, as well as the interpretation, where the views of the community remained at the heart of the study. This participatory, reflexivity made the research findings more relevant and applicable as they were based on the local realities and not on the abstract theory.

According to this research, there are a number of practice and policy implications. The development strategies should focus on future development including enhancement of capacity building especially in the field of tourism management and hospitality skills and encouraging youth participation in the development through their active involvement in the leadership positions. The infrastructure development, such as better roads, more internet services, and waste management, is paramount to maintaining the satisfaction of visitors and ensuring the economic sustainability of the village in the long term. Through formalized governance systems, adequate documentation and succession planning, institutional strengthening will enable the community-based tourism to survive even after the arrival of the generations. Moreover, incorporation of the homestay tourism into the wider rural settlement and climate change strategies will boost resilience, preserve cultural and ecological capital, and offer a framework of how to achieve sustainable growth.

Ghale Gaun also depicts that community-led, cultural authenticity, and strategic-planned rural homestay tourism can be a potent driver of holistic rural development. Although there are still some issues especially in infrastructure, youth participation and institutional capacity, the village provides a model that can be replicated by other rural destinations in need of finding a compromise between economic growth and social and environmental sustainability. The study highlights that market dynamics is not the only crucial factor in the success of such tourism initiatives but also close stewardship, inclusive governance and empowering local actors. This study helps in better comprehension of community-based homestay tourism in Nepal by integrating both direct fieldwork and analytical expertise that can be applicable in the lessons that are applicable to other mountainous and culturally endowed rural communities in the region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would also like to take the chance to heartily thank Smart Tech Nepal and the local government because they gave me an invaluable chance to work in the field as a consultant. Their advice, help, and collaboration provided me with an opportunity to work directly with the community, collect valuable information, and take part in sustainable tourism and development projects in Ghale Gaun. I would like to thank them so much because their trust, support, and desire to cooperate made this fieldwork not only informative but also effective.

REFERENCES

- Gautam, B. (2024). A review on benefits of homestay tourism in Nepal. *Kalika Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 6(1), 132–144. <https://doi.org/10.3126/kjms.v6i1.72374>
- Ghimire, P. (2023). *Community perception and participation for sustainable homestay tourism: A study of Bandipur and Ghalegaun homestay* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Tribhuvan University.

- Gurr, H., Oliver, L., Harvey, O., Subedi, M., & van Teijlingen, E. (2024). Positionality and the significance of positionality to qualitative researchers. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 18(1), 48–54. <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v18i01.67553>
- Jan, F. H., & Lee, T. H. (2019). Can community-based tourism support sustainable development? Evidence derived from locals' opinions about sustainability. *Tourism Management*, 70, 368–380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.09.003>
- Pasanchay, K., & Schott, C. (2021). The ability of community-based tourism homestays to enhance Sustainable Development Goals: A holistic sustainable livelihood perspective. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 37, Article 100784. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2020.100784>
- Subedi, B. P. (2025). Tourism, rural tourism and biodiversity in Nepal. *Journal of Development Review*, 5(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jdr.v5i1>
- Tiwari, D. R., Devkota, N., & Lawaju, P. (2025). Tourist satisfaction and sustainable homestay management: Insights from six rural communities in Western Nepal. *Quest Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 182–200. <https://doi.org/10.3126/qjmss.v7i1.82025>
- Tiwari, J., & Khatiwada, K. (2025). Homestay tourism in Nepal: Poverty alleviation perspectives. *International Research Journal of MMC*, 6(4), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.3126/irjmmc.v6i4.85164>
- Walter, P., Regmi, K. D., & Khanal, P. R. (2018). Nepal community-based ecotourism: Host learning in Sirubari and Ghalegaun homestays. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, 49–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.02.002>